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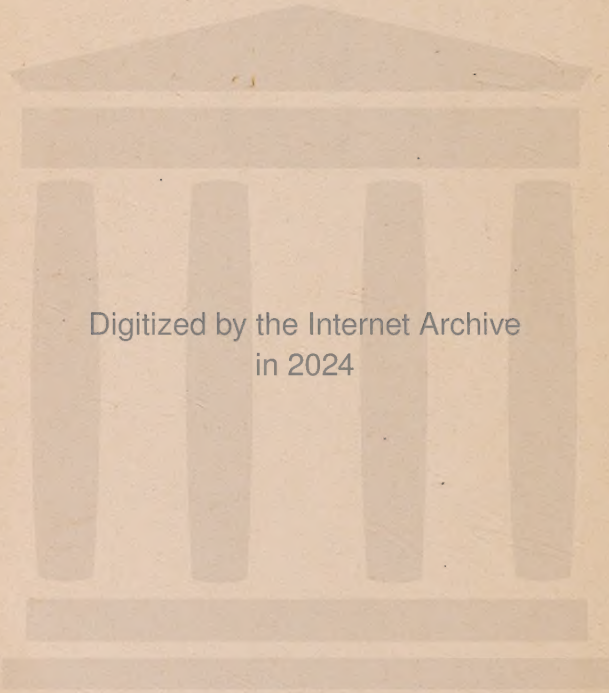
An Interpretation of the Times

C. D. H. McMILLAN, M.A.



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**THE HARVEST AND THE
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History

THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE

An Interpretation of the Times

BY

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Apocalyptic

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PREFACE.

A REVIEWER of Mr. Wells's book, "The Soul of a Bishop," writes of the author: "He sees the whole of civilized Europe convulsed in a struggle, which appears to set at defiance every tenet and hope of Christianity; the Churches seem to display a speechless impotence in the face of the conflict; and Mr. Wells finds himself racked with doubt upon the proper place for a belief in the existence of God amid such a confusion of passion and pure hatred." There is much truth in those words. The world is passing through one of the greatest crises in its long history. Men look to the great theologians and scholars, who are accustomed to handle that Word which is a light in a dark place, for an explanation of all that is happening. But the world has looked in vain. The theologians are dumb. The Church, too, as a Church, has given no great word of guidance. This alone is the reason why one, who makes no pretension to scholarship, ventures to set out in print the interpretation of the times, which has been of inestimable help to him personally, and which he believes to be confirmed by the events of

the past few years. He is indebted to Mr. H. de St. Dalmas and Colonel Garnier for some hints in Chapter IX.; to the Rev. S. Schor for some information concerning the climate of Palestine; to his friend the Rev. T. C. Clark for several suggestions; and to Messrs. Robert Banks & Sons for permission to use two diagrams of the Great Pyramid.

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The Harvest and the Vintage.

I.

THE PREPARATION.

THE great catastrophe which burst upon the world in July, 1914, has brought mankind face to face with the realities of life and death, in a way they have never looked on them before. But even in the midst of the conflict men are asking for a reason. If there be an Almighty God, Who is also our Father, why has this unspeakable calamity fallen upon men? What is the explanation which lies behind this welter of human misery? Was this war foreseen by God? If foreseen, was man in any way forewarned? If forewarned, did man pay no heed to the warning?

Such questions as these are passing through men's minds, and they demand an answer. This little book is an attempt to answer these questions, and to indicate, hypothetically and not dogmatically, where we stand in the chain of God's providential ruling of the world.

Our Saviour told His followers that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke xxi. 24). As Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles (November, 1917), we conclude that we are still living in the times of the Gentiles. But there are many indications that those times are swiftly drawing to a close. If it is asked, How will they end?—our Lord's words appear to indicate that they will end in a time of unexampled tribulation and anguish (Luke xxi. 25-28). The events of to-day lead many to believe that this time of great tribulation has already commenced.

But was man forewarned? Undoubtedly! Man was forewarned, not only by the words of Holy Writ, but also by the interpretation which servants of God had given to those words. Man was forewarned by our Saviour: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke xxi. 25, 26; cp. Luke xix. 27). Man was also expressly forewarned in symbolic language by St. John, in the Revelation, as to the means which would be used by the powers of darkness to bring about the great catastrophe.

St. John says: "And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the

beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs : for they are the spirits of devils, working signs ; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty " (xvi. 13, 14).

Let it be granted that such language is anything but clear to the ordinary man, and that he feels the need of an interpreter. What is the interpretation then which those who believe the Revelation to be a continuous prophecy, from the times of St. John to the consummation, put upon these words ?

The leading exponents of the historical school interpret the *dragon* as meaning the Roman Empire, which persecuted the Church.* That persecution was continued when Imperial Rome had passed into Papal Rome, and its dominions had been split up into a varying number of kingdoms. By the *beast* is to be understood the Papacy ; and by the *false prophet* the priesthood of the Roman Church.† According to this interpretation the three spirits are Infidelity, Popery, and Priestcraft.

Another exponent of the same school suggests them to be Infidelity, Worldliness, and Popery.‡ But since these three frog-like spirits are to go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of

* Elliott, Hor. Apoc. III. 14. † Hor. Apoc. III. 494-5.

‡ Hoare : " Rome, Turkey, and Jerusalem," p. 61.

God, the Almighty, should we not more correctly assign to the first spirit that active principle of militarism which is so largely responsible for the present upheaval? Militarism has its foundation in infidelity, for it bases its faith upon force, and not in the living God. The Roman Empire was essentially a military one, and it is this characteristic which is most prominent in the prophet Daniel's description of the fourth beast, which the above school of interpretation assigns to the Roman Empire (Dan. vii. 7). Since, however, St. John represents these three spirits as working for one end, we probably are correct in ascribing to their influence not only the infidelity and militarism of our age, but also those countless underground currents which had produced such a ferment among the nations of the world, that just prior to the great war, and during its continuance, unrest, strikes, rebellions, and revolutions were in progress in all parts of the earth, from Finland to the Cape, and from China to Mexico.

More important, perhaps, than the exact definition of what these spirits are, is the indication of the time when they would arise.

They came forth to do their work during the outpouring of the Sixth Vial. The era of that vial is indicated by the words, "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up." The *River Euphrates* is interpreted as the prophetic

symbol of the Turkish Empire. Now, although that empire began to decay and its dominions were lessened prior to the nineteenth century, yet the most marked deterioration commenced about the year 1820, and has continued at a constantly accelerating rate ever since. It is about the year 1820, then, that exponents of the historical school of interpretation place the commencement of the outpouring of the Sixth Vial.

Now, taking the above outline of interpretation at its own face value, let it be tested by asking whether there has been any marked activity, in the spirit of militarism, in the policy of the Papacy, and in what is termed priestcraft, since the year 1820, which appears to be directly connected with the present upheaval?

The spirit of militarism has certainly manifested a most active influence in the world since 1820. The Prussian system of training every man capable of bearing arms, which was inaugurated in that country after the defeats of Jena and Auerstadt, in 1806, culminated in the three triumphant wars of 1864, 1866, and 1870. After the latter date the Prussian system was in general adopted by continental Europe. If the present upheaval of the world be a part of the great gathering of the nations together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty, then we must conclude that this spirit of militarism is largely responsible for all that has taken place in that connection.

But has the Vatican been in any way responsible for this great world-wide calamity? Two quotations will suffice to suggest an answer to that question. One is from the pen of the late Cardinal Manning. Writing with reference to the temporal power in *The Tablet* of January, 1874, he said: "There is only one solution of the difficulty, a solution, I fear, impending, and that is the terrible scourge of continental war, a war which will exceed the horrors of any of the wars of the first Empire. And it is my firm conviction that, in spite of all obstacles, the Vicar of Jesus Christ will be put again in his own rightful place. But that day will not be until his adversaries will have crushed each other with mutual destruction."

The other is from a statement made to Dr. White (late Ambassador of the United States, and President of the American Legation at the Hague Conference of 1899) by an eminent Roman Catholic representative of a Roman Catholic Power at that Conference:

"The Vatican always has been, and is to-day, a storm centre. The Pope and his advisers have never hesitated to urge on war, no matter how bloody, when the slightest of their ordinary worldly purposes could be served by it."

Such words appear to indicate a knowledge of working plans and active efforts which have been concealed from the majority of mankind. But the question is, Are they borne out by the attitude of the Papacy during the course of the war?

In his account of Europe in 1914, Dr. E. J. Dillon, writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, January 2nd, 1915, says :

“ One of the most remarkable features of Catholic Italy to-day is the strong and avowed leaning of the extreme clerical party towards Austria and Germany. The genesis of that curious affinity is obvious. The wisdom of proclaiming it is doubtful.”

Most readers will endorse those words as being true also of the three years which have followed.

But has the priesthood of Rome been active on the same side ? Two quotations from a recent writer are very suggestive upon this point :

“ The clergy had never renounced the hope of a revival of the temporal power of the Popes. It firmly believed that in the event of a successful war, of which it failed to appreciate the inevitable consequences, it would become possible once more for the Emperor Francis Joseph to come forward as the defender of the faith. His reward for his support of German ambitions would be the right to raise the Church of Rome once more to the pinnacle at which it stood before the waves of progress had swept away its dominion.”

And again, “ A friend of mine, who happened to be staying at a country house in Transylvania when the war broke out, related to me that the peasantry, when told that it had to prepare to start for the army, was quite convinced that it was going to fight for the restoration of the temporal

power of the Pope. Had it not been persuaded that such was the case, it is to be doubted whether it would have shown so much enthusiasm as it eventually displayed.”*

Whether the exponents of prophecy were correct or not in their interpretation of the Sixth Vial may be a matter of dispute ; but that they were right in their conclusion is certain, for E. B. Elliott, writing in 1861, says of the three unclean spirits :

“ First go forth vauntingly against it the spirits of superstition and infidelity ; then finally comes the appeal to physical force in the war of the great day of God Almighty.”†

And again, “ In the third and fourth centuries, it was not merely by argument and speaking and writing on the part of the literary and of philosophers that the war was carried on, but by physical force also, and at length, in fine, by the mighty armies of Roman heathenism under Maxentius, Maximin, Licinius, so we have to look for the same terrible agency of war, under leaders animated by each and every one of the unclean spirits here described, against evangelic Protestant Christianity ; and, as I cannot but suppose, against that country most especially which has been for three hundred years, above all others, its favoured home, viz., England.”‡

Contrast, then, with the blindness of the politicians

* “ The Austrian Court from Within,” Princess Catherine Radziwill, pp. 199 and 214.

† Hor. Apoc. III., 496.

‡ Hor. Apoc. III., p. 533.

the fact that a student of prophecy, fifty years before the great catastrophe, foresaw and forewarned men that such would take place. He timed it to coincide with the "drying-up" of the Turkish Empire; contrast this with the fact that in spite of the Agadir crisis, in spite of the Balkan wars, in the very face of the universal ferment throughout the world, the statesmen and politicians of this country, with very few exceptions, could not see the possibility of the outbreak of war even four months before it took place.

"In the years before the outbreak of hostilities, who among the members of the Cabinet, the House of Lords, or the House of Commons gave consecutive thought to the possibility of our being involved in a struggle on the Continent and to the naval and military policy to be followed? I can only think of three, or at most four, Ministers or ex-Ministers who did so. The country generally was similarly careless; in the Spring of 1914 assurances in the House of Commons from Mr. Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the expenditure on the Navy and Army was to be reduced were welcomed by the majority of the nation."*

True! Elliott appears—as others after him—to have thought the attack would come from France. He wrote before the rise of Prussia, and at a time

* Archibald Hurd, "British Navy and Its Work," *Daily Telegraph*, August 10th, 1917.

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when French colonels had a habit of rattling their sabres. But the fact remains that fifty years before the event he saw clearly that the attack must come from somewhere ; while the politicians five months before the event could not see that it could come from anywhere.

II.

THE TRIBULATION DIVIDED.

WE have already seen that the times of the Gentiles are to end in great tribulation. Few people, however, have grasped the fact that the tribulation is divided into two parts; fewer still realize that the Church goes through the first part of the tribulation, but is delivered out of the second part:

The first hint that the tribulation is divided into two parts is given by the Prophet Joel, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, tread ye: for the winepress is full, the fats overflow: for their wickedness is great" (iii. 13). In this verse it is universally agreed that the harvest is one of wrath, and the vintage also.

If we turn to the Book of the Revelation of St. John, we shall find this same double figure of the harvest and vintage (xiv. 15, 18-20). Here, however, it is by no means clear whether the harvest is one of mercy, that blessed ingathering of the saints, which both the language of our Lord and also St. Paul leads us to expect, or whether it is a harvest of judgment. Learned theologians are about equally divided in their opinions. But there

are three words, or phrases, which must incline us to believe that it is a harvest of wrath.

First, the sickle is described as being sharp. The word translated *sickle* is used in the New Testament only in this chapter and once in St. Mark's Gospel (iv. 29). Its use in St. Mark is quite indeterminate; but in this chapter the sickle used in the vintage is certainly a sickle of wrath. Both the sickles of this chapter are said to be sharp. Now, apart from this chapter, the word translated *sharp* is used three times in this book, and each time it is suggestive of severity or judgment. "Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword" (i. 16); "these things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges" (ii. 12); and most significant of all, "and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations" (xix. 15).

Secondly, the harvest is said to be ripe, or dried up. Apart from this chapter the word translated *ripe* is used some fourteen times in the New Testament, and only once—in the case of the woman with the issue of blood—is it used of blessing. It is the word used for the blasting of the fig-tree (Mark xi. 21); for the branches to be burnt (John xv. 6); and to describe the man's withered hand (Mark iii. 1).

Thirdly, it is the harvest of the earth. The word *earth* is used in the Apocalypse always in a bad sense, except in xxi. 1, where the *new earth*, marked off by that epithet *new*, is sharply distinguished from the *first earth*. For these reasons

we conclude with many learned expositors that the harvest of Revelation xiv. is not a harvest of mercy, but is one of judgment.

This harvest is followed, apparently after an interval, by the vintage of the earth. The description of the vintage is appalling in its intensity of woe. If these present times should be the ingathering of the harvest of the earth, then the description would lead us to suppose that the vintage scene will be infinitely worse than the misery and woe which has already been occasioned by the gathering in of some eight million young souls into the unseen.

Now, at this point it is important to notice that the book, which St. John saw in his vision (v. 1), was written within, and on the back. Just as a legal document has a synopsis of its contents on the outside, and a full description within, so also many expositors believe that parts of this Book of Revelation—all of which St. John saw in vision—correspond to the writing on the outside of the book or roll, and that other and more lengthy scenes are supplementary to these, and correspond to what was written on the inside of the book.

Adopting this supposition we believe that the harvest and the vintage scenes (xiv.) are but a synopsis of the more lengthy description of the Seventh Vial (xvi. 17-21), and the destruction by the Son of God of the armies of the kings of the earth, which are opposed to his army (xix. 11-19). Indeed,

a very important expression in this latter chapter directly links it up with the vintage scene of the earlier chapter. That expression is found in chapter xix. 15 : " He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God " ; while in chapter xiv. we read of " the great winepress of the wrath of God." Are we wrong, then, in supposing that the vintage scene in chapter xiv. is the same terrible vintage scene in chapter xix., in which the birds of the air are summoned to feed on the flesh of kings, and captains, and mighty men, and of horses, and of all men, both small and great ?

If this be so, it would appear to be the same terrible scene which is pictured by Isaiah under the same vivid image of the winepress (lxiii.).

We are, moreover, probably correct in linking up this vintage scene with the great scene of judgment depicted by the Prophet Zechariah (xii. 9-14) ; and with that described at length by the Prophet Ezekiel (xxxviii. and xxxix.).

But, further, this same chapter xix. of Revelation is linked up by a very important expression with the words of our Lord, and with a very different scene. That expression reads, " For the marriage of the Lamb is come ; and his wife hath made herself ready." These words at once connect the earlier part of this chapter with the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew xxv.).

Now our Lord distinctly intimates that a time of great tribulation will ensue upon the earth after

the wise virgins have entered into the marriage festival and the door is shut. The Lord indicates this by the eager cry of the foolish virgins, "Lord, Lord, open to us"; by the reference to the weeping and gnashing of teeth outside the closed door (Luke xiii. 24-30); by the words, "cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth"; and by the concluding verses in the sermon on the mount (Matthew vii. 21-27).

It is important to notice that the tribulation, which follows the closing of the door in the parable of the Ten Virgins, while it is certainly not the tribulation mentioned in the previous chapter (xxiv. 29), is yet successive to it. This latter is the first part of the tribulation, and it precedes the ingathering of the saints; the second part of the tribulation follows the ingathering of the saints. This ingathering of the saints, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (xxiv. 31), and which appears to be tantamount to the entry of the wise virgins in the following chapter, is also that rapture of the saints which is spoken of by St. Paul (1 Thess. iv. 16-18).

We therefore conclude that the tribulation is divided into two parts—the first part corresponding to the Harvest scene in Revelation—and we believe that it is this time of trial which the world is

passing through at this present moment, and the Church also ; the second part of the tribulation is that which follows the shutting of the door in the parable of the Ten Virgins, and which corresponds to the Vintage scene in the Revelation, and it is out of this time of anguish and woe that the Church is delivered by being caught up into the Presence of her Lord.

But why should it be supposed that the tribulation spoken of by our Lord, when He says, " But immediately, after the tribulation of those days " (Matt. xxiv. 29) is the time of trial which the world is passing through at the present moment ? Must not those words rather refer to the destruction of Jerusalem ? But even suppose they have a later application, why should they not refer to some time of trial in the past, such, for instance, as the Napoleonic wars ? Why not to some cataclysm yet to come ? Surely it must be a purely arbitrary effort of the imagination which causes any person to apply these words of our Lord to this particular time, and, apart from the destruction of Jerusalem, to no other !

A careful comparison, however, of St. Luke's account of our Lord's predictions uttered on the Mount of Olives, with that of St. Matthew, affords a very strong presumption as to the accuracy of the contention stated above. If to that comparison there is added the light which can be obtained on this matter from certain words of St. John,

in the Book of Revelation, we approach as near to certainty as is possible in such matters.

Now, if we look at the beginning of St. Matthew xxiv., we find that the Apostles asked our Lord three distinct questions. They asked, When shall these things be? That question referred directly to the destruction of Jerusalem. But they also asked two other questions, What shall be the sign of Thy coming, or of Thy presence? and of the end of the world, or the consummation of the age? These questions involved more than the Apostles realized. They probably thought that the end of the age was bound up with the destruction of Jerusalem, and our Lord's answer is so framed that it is difficult to say exactly what applies to the destruction of Jerusalem, and what applies to the end of the age. This difficulty is very much lessened when we accept as a working principle that the destruction of Jerusalem is probably a type of the end of this age, and that therefore some portions of this chapter have a primary fulfilment in the destruction of the Holy City, and a secondary fulfilment at the end of the age. The treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles has not yet quite ceased, "and immediately after *that tribulation* which shall happen *when the cup of Gentile iniquity is full*, and *when the gospel shall have been preached in all the world* for a witness, and *rejected by the Gentiles*, shall the coming of the Lord Himself happen."*

* Alford, "Greek Testament," id. loc.

The gospel has been preached throughout the whole world as a witness to a greater extent than it had been preached throughout the Roman world, as a witness, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. If St. Paul in his letter to the Colossians could speak of "the gospel, which is come unto you, as it is in all the world," how much more can we?

Now, since the rapture of the saints is to follow swiftly after the tribulation, "immediately after the tribulation of those days," we conclude that the tribulation spoken of cannot refer to a time of stress and trial even as recent as the Napoleonic wars.

Now, that the word *tribulation* (verse 29) refers to the present time of crisis, and to no other, is borne out by what St. Luke tells us. He, like St. Matthew, alludes to signs in sun, moon, and stars. He, too, speaks of men seeing the Son of Man. He further speaks of men fainting for fear, and for looking after the things which are coming on the earth. But immediately before those verses he wrote the words, "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke xxi. 24). Now, those words are a clear intimation that the tribulation referred to would coincide with a period when Jerusalem should cease to be trodden down of the Gentiles. That time is surely at hand. The planting of a Jewish State in Palestine is favourably regarded by the British Government;

and, since this appears to be in line with the prophetic scriptures, we have little doubt but that it will be an accomplished fact in the near future.

Now, this line of reasoning is borne out by the very important proleptic or anticipatory statement which St. John records, and which is found under the description of the Sixth Vial (Rev. xvi. 12-16). The words are embedded between verses 14 and 16. The whole statement reads as follows :

“ For they are spirits of devils, working signs ; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God the Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew, Har-Magedon.”

Now, the preparatory work of these evil spirits was carried out under the Sixth Vial, which is now past.

The effect of their work, namely, the war (not the battle) of the great day of God the Almighty, appears to be one set of events, and to correspond to the harvest judgment, or the “ tribulation of those days ” ; and the gathering together at Har-Magedon appears to be another set of events, and to correspond to the vintage judgment, which follows the closing of the door.

Embedded between these two scenes is the warning voice, “ Behold, I come as a thief.” These words link up with the words, “ Behold, the Bride-

groom cometh," on the one hand, and with the words, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. xix. 7), on the other.

Now, the Sixth Vial was poured out upon the River Euphrates, and the water was dried up. As we have already noted, the Euphrates is the prophetic symbol of the Turkish power. And if we are right in our supposition that "the tribulation of those days" is the present time of stress, which the world is now passing through, a time of stress which precedes the rapture of the saints; then, also, we should expect to find that at the time of this tribulation the Turkish Empire would be swiftly diminishing, because the drying up of the Euphrates also precedes the rapture of the saints.

Now, what prophecy might have led us to expect we actually see happening before our eyes. Just previous to the outbreak of the great war Turkey had lost the province of Tripoli, large sections of her Balkan provinces, not to mention the island of Crete. While during the present war the slender thread by which she held Egypt has been severed, she has lost Arabia with its sacred cities, and she is losing (November, 1917) Palestine and Mesopotamia.

Therefore, since St. John gives us the hint that the Turkish Empire will be receding when the nations are gathered together in a great war; since St. Luke foreshadows that when Jerusalem shall cease to be trodden down of the Gentiles

men shall be full of apprehension at these things which are happening upon the earth; since St. Matthew warns us that after "the tribulation of those days" the sun, moon, and stars (prophetic symbols of kings, princes, and governments) shall be darkened, and that we see this happening even before the tribulation is over—are we not warranted in concluding that we are actually passing through that time of trial spoken of by our Lord when He alluded to the "tribulation of those days"?

But, further, if this line of reasoning be correct, then the tribulation is divided into two distinct and separate parts; and we conclude that the Church passes through the first part, but is delivered by the rapture out of the second part.

But if this line of reasoning be incorrect, are we not tied down to this terrible dilemma: either the language of Holy Writ, such as "the plague thereof was exceeding great," or, "the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God," means nothing in particular—which to a reverent mind is unthinkable—or else there yet remain two judgments still to come upon the earth, namely, the Harvest and the Vintage, worse than the present awful infliction? For if God has not forewarned man of the present dreadful calamity, but has seen fit to forewarn men of two others, namely, the Harvest and the Vintage, then we can only conclude that they must both be more terrible than the present time.

III.

THE SEVENTH VIAL.

IN the sixteenth chapter of Revelation we have the description of the outpouring of the Seventh Vial, or Bowl. It runs as follows :—

“ And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air ; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done : and there were lightnings and voices and thunders ; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell : and Babylon the Great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men : and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail ; for the plague thereof is exceeding great ” (R.V.).

Every word of these verses should be read and pondered over ; and we think that many will

come to the conclusion that no prophetic language could be more exact and yet more striking in its description of the time of the present war, the harvest of the earth.

It opens with the words "The seventh poured out his bowl upon the air." These words at once recall to the mind the fact that the great adversary of mankind is termed by St. Paul the prince of the power of the air (Ephes. ii. 2). The words also remind us that the saints are to meet their Lord in the same aerial region (1 Thess. iv. 17). Such a stupendous event as the rapture of the saints, which includes the meeting of all the saints of all the ages, would suggest some work of preparation in the unseen. Is it to this that the words *poured out his bowl upon the air* primarily refer? If so, these words would appear to link up with the very mysterious words of the prophet Isaiah, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together in the pit, and shall be shut in prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously" (xxiv. 21-23).

These words are not only very important in themselves, but they are also very suggestive of the Seventh Vial period.

The prophet contrasts the host of the high ones and the kings of the earth. Are we wrong in supposing that the host of the high ones are those principalities and powers, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places of which St. Paul speaks in his epistle to the Ephesians?

Now, throughout the series of the Seven Vials there is found to be a close correspondence between the events which happen upon the earth and the symbols which are used in St. John's record of his vision. Thus in the Sixth Vial we have already seen that the River Euphrates is the symbol of the Ottoman power. Is it far-fetched to suppose that man's earthly conquest of the air is that correspondence under the Seventh Vial? When we remember that in all probability unseen preparation is going on in the aerial regions, for the rapture of the saints, it suggests that such an interpretation is at least a possible one. If this be so, we should date the passing from the Sixth to the Seventh Vial about the commencement of the present century.

St. John then goes on to say, "And there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done."

If we ask the question, What is done? many answers suggest themselves. Doubtless the words refer in the first instance to the pouring out of the contents of the bowl, and the completion of the bowl, or vial, series. The series of the Seven Vials

appears to be bound up with the seventh trumpet, just as the seven trumpets were bound up with the seventh seal. And since with the blowing of the seventh trumpet and the pouring out of the Seven Vials, the mystery of God is to be finished, the words are eminently suggestive that the original commission given to man to subdue the earth (Gen. i. 28), and the commission given to the Church to publish the Gospel among all nations, should be completed also. It is therefore not uninteresting to note that it was only in the early years of this century, after innumerable failures, that man stood on both the North and South Pole, and so completed in outline the task given him back in the beginning. And it is also interesting to note that the Church's task of publishing the Gospel among all nations is now nearing completion.

The next expression of the Seer runs, "And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders." According to the usual interpretation of the historical school this expression means threatenings of wars,—wars and tumults. This interpretation was more than fulfilled by the Agadir and Algeciras crises; by the Morocco war, the Turco-Italian war, and the Balkan wars; and by the innumerable strikes, civil tumults, and incipient revolutions which took place before the great war.

And then we read the words, "And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake,

so mighty." Could words be more descriptive than these of the present world-wide war?

According to Sir Isaac Newton in his work on the Apocalypse, "Great earthquakes and the shaking of heaven and earth are put for the shaking of kingdoms so as to distract or overthrow them."* Others simply define the Apocalyptic earthquake as a revolution. But historically the dynamic of the earthquake appears in each case to have been war. For example, the overthrow of paganism in the Roman empire is described in the apocalyptic language as a great earthquake (vi. 12), the main cause, namely, the preaching of the Christian faith, had been at work for nearly three centuries, but the dynamic, which brought about the final crisis, was the successful war of Constantine the Great.

The present upheaval is in itself a revolution. Never before have whole nations, as distinct from national fighting forces, so directly engaged in warfare.

"Great nations have never thrown themselves into a conflict in this way before. Their whole strength has gone into it—the strength of man, woman, and child able to help, excepting only those who from cowardice, sloth, selfishness, or mental aberration separate themselves from their fellows."†

* Prophetic Invest. Society, No. 8, p. 6.

† "The Coming Revolution," Dr. Arthur Shadiwell, "Nineteenth Century," July, 1917.

Could words describe the strain and stress, the tumult and destruction, the misery and want caused by the present war more effectively than the words, "There was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty"?

St. John then goes on to give the appearance of the Roman earth as he saw it in the vision, "And the great city was divided into three parts." If we consider that the language of the Apostle, while confined in general to the Roman geographical world, yet on occasion oversteps that boundary, especially in this part of his book (*e.g.* iii. 10, xvi. 12, 14), then words could not more strikingly convey the appearance of Europe at the outbreak of the great catastrophe. The language is general, not minute; it applies to what strikes the eye of the beholder of the historical reality, even as to what struck the eye of the Seer in the vision. Looking at Europe in August, 1914, the eye was riveted on its tripartite division; there were the Western Powers, the Central Powers, and the great Eastern Power. For the time being the rest of the world hardly counted. But it may be that the words refer to a tripartite division of the area covered by the old Roman Empire after the war—the dynamic of the earthquake—has passed away.

The writer then goes on to say, "And the cities of the nations fell." If we are to take these words quite literally—though that is contrary to the usual

rule of apocalyptic symbols—no words could be more true. For if possibly more villages and towns were wasted in the Thirty Years' War, which, however, is a matter of opinion, yet never have so many cities and villages been pulverized and destroyed as in this terrible conflict.

If, however, we take the words as being the symbol of the industrialism and capitalism on which our cities have been built up, then it is probably true to say that the social system we knew in 1913 has gone, never to return. The next phrase concerning Babylon the Great we reserve for consideration in a later chapter.

We then get the words, "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." This is a difficult expression. Sir Isaac Newton defines the words thus, "Mountains and islands stand for the cities of the earth and sea politic, with the territories and dominions belonging to those cities." This definition appears to be as difficult as the symbol. The expression has occurred before in this book, during the period of the Sixth Seal (vi. 14); historical interpretators assign that period to the era of Constantine the Great. It will be sufficient, then, to interpret the words as meaning that some of the most outstanding features of the social and political landscape, which existed before the war, will be found to be removed when the earthquake has passed away. But it may be that others would take the symbols more literally, as

in parts of apocalyptic literature we are obliged to do (*e.g.* xiv. 6) ; then it is obvious that the natural barriers of nations, which are mountain ranges and seas, scarce form even a hindrance to the surging tide of war.

The narration concludes with the description of the great hailstorm : “ And great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, cometh down from heaven upon *the* men : and *the* men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail ; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.”

We translate the article, for we disagree with Dean Alford’s words that the word *men* “ must apparently be generic here ; it can hardly mean *the men*, for the plague is universal.” In the same paragraph the Dean refers to Josephus as speaking of the stones, which were thrown from the machines in the siege of Jerusalem as being each one a talent in weight. Fortunately, in God’s providence the plague is not universal ; but words could not be more apt to describe the storm of iron hail which is falling with dire effect upon the shell-swept plains of Europe. And there is rising up from every front a constant shout of imprecations into the hearing of the Supreme Being ; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

IV.

THE HARVEST.

BETWEEN the harvest and the vintage in Palestine, the husbandman is engaged in threshing the wheat. In the process the chaff is separated from the grain, and by the action of the light and continuous breeze, which at that season blows over the land, the chaff is collected into a large heap by itself, and the grain, by its superior weight, is collected into a heap on the threshing floor. So also our Lord in the parable of the Tares said, "In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them : but gather the wheat into my barn."

We may safely venture to assume, then, that whenever the harvest judgment breaks upon the earth, a separating process will be going on at the same time, and will continue for a period after the work of the sickle has been accomplished. If we are correct in supposing that the harvest judgment is even now taking place, we must expect to see this process of separation going on, and driving all who have a spark of faith to declare themselves

more and more on the side of the Lord, and similarly we may expect to see a hardening process at work in the case of those who have no faith; so that in either case character is being stereotyped.

If we confined our attention to the parable of the Tares only (Matt. xiii.) we should expect all that offends to be consumed first, before the gathering of the wheat into the barn. But if we look on to the parable of the Draw Net in the same chapter, we find that the process is there reversed. The good fish are gathered out first, and the bad are cast away. This parable is hardly likely to be contradictory to the former; it is probably complementary to it. It is not merely a repetition; it indicates a two-fold process.

If we turn over to the Book of the Revelation we find a similar truth conveyed in its mystic language. We have already pointed out that the Seventh Vial appears to correspond to the harvest judgment, and that in chapter xix. we get the terrible vintage judgment. Between the two, in chapter xviii., we have narrated the fall of Babylon. Whatever Babylon may mean, its destruction appears to correspond to the burning of the tares; while the vintage scene appears to correspond to the casting of the bad fish away.

It is interesting to note that the war commenced at the beginning of the harvest; whether it will end at the close of some future harvest remains to be seen.

Whether that be so or not, it is greatly to be feared that the civilized world will appear, after the war, like a wheat field when the harvest is gathered, gaunt and bare, stripped of everything which made its appearance beautiful.

It is the harvest of the earth which is being reaped by the sharp sickle, and over eight million of young souls have been gathered in by the reaper Death. But it is not only the young manhood of Europe—that young manhood which before the war had so largely forgotten God—but it is the wealth of the world also which is being reaped. This reminds us of the words of St. James, “Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days” (v. 3). It is a matter of little moment whether St. James was thinking wholly of his own days, and of the coming crisis, which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, or whether in the background of his mind there was an anticipation of the early Advent of our Lord. He had in mind the end of a dispensation, a like crisis, as we believe, to the present time. The wars of that period, or of any period for that matter, produce certain problems, which the war of to-day must also bring in its train. For if after the white horse of prosperity there comes the red horse of war, then this is certain to be followed by the black horse of famine, and later by the pale horse

of pestilence. And if before the war the face of Europe could be likened to a field of ripe grain, then after the war the civilized world will be bare, with stubble where there had been wheat, and the ground unproductive, until the face of the earth has been completely turned up by the plough, and nature and history resume a new appearance. In the realm of nature all this may be effected with but little suffering, save to the crawling denizens of the soil, but in the realm of man the process is not accomplished without want and toil, suffering and sorrow, all of which point like fingers of destiny to the more fearful vintage of the future.

V.

THE INTERMEDIATE TIME.

BETWEEN the harvest and the vintage there was a considerable lapse of time. The harvest usually commences in Palestine on the plains at the beginning of May, and is all over on the highest hills by the middle of June.* The vintage followed in August and the early part of September. During that interval the sun shone with undimmed splendour, making the dry earth ever harder, and no refreshing showers of rain fell to soften it. Are we to infer that between these two judgment eras of the harvest and the vintage a hardening process will be going on, and that no refreshing showers of spiritual grace will convert the ungodly and bring them into the kingdom of the Lord? We much fear that it will be even so.

There appears to be no sign of repentance under the Seventh Vial, and the parable of the Ten Virgins is also suggestive of that view. It is to this period of the interval between the harvest and the vintage that we must assign that parable. It may be that already the cry has gone forth at this midnight

* "Everyday Life in the Holy Land," Neil, p. 103.

hour, "Behold, the Bridegroom!" Or perhaps that cry is not destined to make itself heard until after the present tribulation is over (Matt. xxiv. 30). There has certainly been an increased interest among Christians in the subject of our Lord's Advent, such as has not been evinced since the middle of the nineteenth century, when E. B. Elliott, John Cumming, and many others raised the advent cry, and lived in the utmost expectation of our Lord's return. Their immediate expectations were wrong, but their proclamation was right. There had to be upon this earth some correspondence to that warning voice which St. John heard in his vision midway during the outpouring of the Sixth Vial, "Behold, I come as a thief." The men who were raised up midway in the nineteenth century to warn the world of the Saviour's Second Advent fulfilled to the letter, on the plane of human history, the warning voice which St. John heard in his vision.

We may expect then that the Advent cry will wax yet louder. In many directions, too, we see signs of the Virgins arising and trimming their lamps. It was not a little remarkable how in the National Mission it was largely left to each and all to do the trimming of their own lamps.

Now it is very interesting to note that the parable of the Ten Virgins appears to indicate that a total reversal of opinion will take place suddenly in a very large section of the Church. The Ten Virgins

represent the visible Church just before the rapture of the saints. The division into wise and foolish virgins must have its counterpart in the divisions of Church life to-day. It is by no means improbable that the foolish virgins will occupy the more important position in the eyes of the world. Certainly at the first Advent the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the counterpart of the foolish virgins in the Jewish Church, were far more prominent than the Annas and Simeons, or such men as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. But whether that be so or not, certain it is that there is a sudden and complete reversal of Church opinion and Church outlook just at the end. This is indicated by the request of the foolish virgins, "Give us of *your* oil ; for our lamps are going out."

If we realize that the parable represents the whole visible Church throughout the world we can only suppose that this sudden and abrupt change is produced by some event which is world-wide in the startling character of its effect. Is such an event anywhere indicated in Holy Writ? And, further, if such an event is recorded, is there any indication that it happens between the harvest judgment and the vintage judgment?

We think there is, and that it can be found in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation.

Between the description of the Seventh Vial, which we believe to correspond to the harvest judgment, and the vintage judgment, disclosed in

chapter xix., there is sketched in chapter xvii. the rise of what is termed Babylon the Great, and in chapter xviii. there is given a lurid account of her fall. So far as we can see, from the pages of Holy Writ, this event, and this event alone, is the only one worthy to account for that great change of opinion in the visible Church, indicated by the words, "Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are going out."

But what is Babylon the Great ? It is, perhaps, best to give as an answer some of the more prominent interpretations, and to leave the reader to judge for himself.

We commence with the interpretation of the early Fathers. This is one of the things in which they were practically unanimous. Babylon the Great, in the judgment of the early Fathers, was Imperial Rome. Their opinions are admirably summed up by the historian Gibbon in the words following : "The edification of the new Jerusalem was to advance by equal steps with the destruction of the mystic Babylon ; and as long as the emperors who reigned before Constantine persisted in the profession of idolatry, the epithet of Babylon was applied to the city and to the empire of Rome. A regular series was prepared of all the moral and physical evils which can afflict a flourishing nation ; intestine discord, and the invasion of the fiercest barbarians from the unknown regions of the north ; pestilence and famine, comets and eclipses, earthquakes and inundations—all these were only

so many preparatory and alarming signs of the great catastrophe of Rome, when the country of the Scipios and Cæsars should be consumed by a flame from heaven, and the city of the seven hills, with her palaces, her temples, and her triumphal arches, should be buried in a vast lake of fire and brimstone" ("Decline and Fall," chapter xv.).

When, however, the Emperor of Rome became a Christian, a different method of interpretation was certain to arise; and so we find a spiritual meaning given to the Book of the Revelation by St. Augustine and others. The great city Babylon might be considered as realized in the world and its members, and the thousand years' reign was held to be the interval between the First and Second Advent of our Lord.

In the Middle Ages, Joachim of Floris, a Cistercian abbot, the greatest prophetic expounder of his time, concluded that Babylon is papal Rome, and by the harlot is meant, not the righteous, but the evil-minded multitudes which lodged within the fold. Joachim's views were further elaborated by the Franciscans.

At the Reformation, since the Church of Rome had herself forged such a weapon, this interpretation was seized on with avidity by Luther and other reformers, regardless of the fact that various writings of Joachim had been condemned by the councils of the Church. With many variations it has developed into the continuous historical school.

The futurist school of interpretation considers Babylon the Great as signifying a literal city of Babylon, which has yet to be built upon the original site.

Among the modern interpretations we may mention that of Dr. Milligan, in the Expositors' Bible: "By Babylon is to be understood the degenerate Church. . . . Babylon, then, is not pagan Rome . . . cannot be papal Rome. . . . Nor can we think of Babylon as a great city of the future. . . . Babylon is the world in the Church."

It is not difficult to make the present critical days apply to any one of these theories, except the first, which, if correct, shows, as the preterists hold, that the whole Book of Revelation, except the last two and a half chapters, has to do with the past. Nor is it difficult to see that a worldly minded Church might be driven to a very swift change of front by mortal wounds inflicted on our anti-Christian civilization.

Personally, we believe that it is the Reformers' view which time will prove to be correct, and that in a not far distant future. We believe that the early Fathers were not wrong as regards the place, but only as regards the time when the fall of Babylon should take place, and were in complete ignorance as to the vast changes which would follow from pagan Rome being changed into papal Rome.

As Nemesis fell upon the throne of France in the past, and has fallen on the throne of Russia

in the present, so also we believe it is destined to fall on the chair of St. Peter in the near future, because of the countless crimes, martyrdoms, and iniquities which have been associated with various occupants of that exalted position.

When we recollect that comparatively unknown trade union officials have condemned the barbarous crimes of the German U-boat campaign, and that he, who claims to be the head of the Christian Church on earth, has not condemned them ; when we reflect that a countless number of lowly and unknown persons have condemned by voice and pen the German atrocities in Belgium, and that the Supreme Pontiff has not taken a single decisive step to defend his helpless co-religionists and devoted followers in that unhappy land ; and when we further consider the fact that the whole attitude of the Bishop of Rome throughout the great catastrophe has indicated more than a passing interest in the success of German and Turkish arms, in spite of the barbarities which have accompanied their progress, we cannot but come to the conclusion that the cup of iniquity must be almost full, and that an avenging Nemesis must fall upon the Papacy in the not very remote future.

But be that interpretation correct or incorrect, it is certain, we think, that some event which will rivet the attention of the whole world must be the cause of that great change of opinion in the visible Church indicated by the words, " Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are going out."

VI.

THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS.

WHATEVER Babylon the Great may mean, the question arises as to whether the rapture of the saints precedes the destruction of Babylon or follows it. The rapture of the saints, like the destruction of Babylon, is an event which comes between the harvest and the vintage ; it corresponds to the gathering of the wheat into the Master's barn, even as the destruction of Babylon corresponds to the burning of the tares. But which event comes first ?

We believe the destruction of the mystic Babylon precedes the rapture ; and for this reason—it was after the vision of the destruction of Babylon that St. John heard the voice of a great multitude in heaven saying, " Hallelujah ; salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God ; for true and righteous are his judgments ; for he hath judged the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand " (Rev. xix. 1, 2). But it was a little later than this that he heard the voice of a great multitude, which he likens to many waters

and mighty thunderings, saying, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready (verse 7).

The rapture of the saints is the supreme hope of the Church to-day, as it has been through all the ages.

It must have been the hope of those pathetic figures, smeared with resin and pitch, who sighed out their last choking breath in smoke and flame in the gardens of Nero, where now stands the great basilica of St. Peter.

It was the hope of such saintly women as Perpetua and her companions who, tormented by the wild beasts in the arena, seemed to be oblivious to their material surroundings and to be translated into the spiritual world.

It must have been the hope of such men as that gallant sailor, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, whose message rang out clear and inspiring to his comrades in the other ship, as he stood calm and fearless on deck, amid the raging waves of the Atlantic, "We are as near to heaven by sea as by land."

Now, this great subject is alluded to in many parts of the Scriptures, but in none more clearly than in the fourth chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians. In plain words that chapter tells us that one day the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven, not to the earth, but to the aerial region which immediately surrounds the earth, and that at His call the dead in Christ shall rise

first. This would appear to include all the Old Testament saints, who looked forward in faith to the Deliverer that should come. It will also include all the saints of the Christian era, from the first martyr down to the latest saint that has passed away to fill up the number of God's elect. All these shall rise again from the dead, and garbed in immortal, perpetual youth shall meet their Lord in the air. "Christ, the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

They shall come from the lonely mountain-top, around which the winds of heaven ever play; and they shall come from the deep, silent caverns of the ocean, where the storms of the centuries and the flight of time are alike unnoticed. They shall come from the quiet graveyards of the country; and they shall come from earth's long-forgotten battle-fields, where the roar of the guns was their funeral knell, and the smoke-cloud the pall which veiled their end from mortal sight.

From that countless host, whom men call the dead, there shall arise every one of the saints of God.

They will be followed immediately by the living saints, transformed in an instant, clothed with immortality, and caught up to meet their Lord in the air. "And so," says the Apostle, "shall we ever be with the Lord."

The rapture of the saints should be *the* great inspiration of every Christian life in these dark and dangerous days.

We admit that the human mind cannot grasp all, or anything like all, that is involved in that wondrous scene. But for those faithful ones who are alive at Christ's coming for His people it means that they shall undergo the change from mortality to immortality as instantaneously as the lightning's flash. For them there shall be no pain, none of those gloomy forebodings of having to depend upon others for supplying their simplest wants, for them none of the dread and fear of death, which comes at times to the bravest.

But the thought of the rapture should also be an inspiration to the Christian in this life. It should be with him when he rises in the morning, warning him to put his best into the work of the day, lest the Master should come and find him negligent and wasteful; and it should be with him as his last thought at night.

But the reflection will rise in many minds, Can it be true? Can it possibly be true that on some day, known to the great God alone, when the sun shall have risen as usual on one sector of the earth, and the darkness of the night shall be sweeping onward on the opposite sector of the globe, hushing the busy toil of men, and bringing sweet sleep to wearied hearts; and when on a third sector of the earth's surface the women are preparing the evening meal; then, suddenly, in an instant, there shall be caught away to Christ all the saints of God in the world?

Impossible as it may sound, yet it is true, if we are to take in their literal sense the words of our Lord and His Apostles. And so *there will* come a day when two women will be grinding at the mill, and the one shall be taken and the other left; *there will* come a day when two shall be sleeping in the same bed, and the one shall be taken and the other left; *there will* come a day when two shall be in the field, engaged in their daily toil, and the one shall be taken and the other left. And when it is said that the one shall be taken, it does not mean that the spirit shall just depart from the body, as, when speaking of one dead, men say, "He was taken last night." But it means that body, soul, and spirit shall be caught away, clothed in the vesture of immortality, and leaving nothing behind but the poor garments of earth, even as the mantle of Elijah fell from him in the moment of his translation.

On that day, then, some one will be caught away in the act of prayer, in God's house, even as Archbishop Benson passed away in Hawarden Church, only leaving no trace behind but the earthly raiment in the space occupied but a moment before.

It means that another will be seated at his table writing for his Lord and Master, as Dale of Birmingham was, and he shall be caught away before the sentence is finished.

It means that at some bedroom door the servant will tap in vain, and when, with blanched faces,

trembling hands have forced the lock, though everything will appear in perfect order, yet the tenant of the room shall have vanished from sight.

Is it possible that such a line of thought can be true? If our Lord's words are to be taken literally, we are compelled to say it must be true. Admitting, then, the truth of this most stupendous event, even if we do not, and can not, understand it, there are yet two thoughts which may well occasion trouble of mind, if we reflect at all upon what the rapture of the saints would appear to indicate.

The first thought is this: Granted the truth of this statement of St. Paul, yet suppose that in that vast throng of the saints of God, amid all the music of heaven and the joy of meeting countless souls whom upon this earth "we loved long since and lost awhile," suppose that the one whom we desire to meet above all those loved companions of earth should be missing? Is it not possible that the glorious meeting in the heavenly places may be for some hearts the most tragic moment of existence?

What is to be said to this thought, which somehow or other surges up in every mind that reflects upon this stupendous scene?

Now, it may well be that our earthly thoughts fall far short of the infinite tenderness and mercy of God, and that many about whom we had doubts are even now among the redeemed, for what may well seem impossible with men is possible with God.

On the other hand, we must also believe that all who, through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the discipline of life, have now the capacity to enter into that glorious scene, will be there. But to enter without the capacity, to be among the guests without the wedding garment, to be among the redeemed, even for a moment of time, when unfit to be there, would only add to the misery of the individual soul. To dwell in the brightness of the light when all light is painful to the impaired vision, to live in the midst of harmonious song when all music is an agony of the soul, would but add pain to loss without increasing happiness.

Moreover, the translation of the mortal into the immortal may be accompanied by such a changed condition of outlook as shall demand new relationships, of which this life has known nothing. For is it a far-fetched thought that as Moses and Elijah, separated in their earthly life by six hundred years, are found united in the pages of the New Testament in a ministry of love and devotion, so also that the pure and heroic soul of Edith Cavell, whose bandaged eyes must have caught the flash of the smoking rifles, as her soul winged its way to Paradise, may even now be linked with the peerless soul of Joan of Arc, the purest and bravest of the daughters of France, who in the long ago was martyred by the brutality, ignorance, and superstition of her English foes?

But, further, there appear to be several passages

in the Scriptures which suggest that, in addition to the Church triumphant, the Bride of Christ, which is made up of all those who have their part in the rapture of the saints, there are multitudes of other redeemed persons who have apparently a lower position in the ranks of heaven.

What, for instance, is the interpretation to be put upon the words, "That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures"? (James i. 18). Or, again, "These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb"? (Rev. xiv. 4). Or, yet again, St. Paul's words, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead"? (Romans xi. 15).

These latter words are usually taken as referring to the conversion of the Jews, and we see no reason to accept any other meaning, but we have reason to believe that the conversion of the Jews takes place in the period of the vintage judgment, and comes after the rapture of the saints (cp. Zech. xiv.).

Or yet again, in that sublime judgment scene recorded by St. Matthew in his twenty-fifth chapter, what are we to understand by the words, "these, my brethren"? Do they refer to the Church triumphant, the wise virgins of the parable? Do they refer to the foolish virgins, trained by discipline, and saved "so as by fire"? Or do they refer to the Jews, the Lord's brethren after the flesh?

And the second thought, which might well cause disquiet of mind, is this, What if the Lord came and I should not be found ready ?

The best antidote to this is to live with the thought of the rapture of the saints constantly before you ; let it be a pervading influence in the background of life ; let the study of God's revealed Word be a daily occupation, and then that day is not likely to come upon you unawares. For it is well for us to remember that we have our Lord's own authority for saying " that as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."

At such a time as this, then, when men's thoughts are engrossed with the events which are happening upon the earth, we may expect the coming of the Lord for His saints.

There is much in our life of to-day that may well give us pause, and make us reflect as to whether the time of the deliverance of God's saints is not very near. Men are blind indeed if they do not see in the events of to-day the logical outcome of human sin, the retribution of a righteous God.

We may well echo those words of Bernard of Morlaix :

" The world is growing evil,
The times are waxing late,
Be sober and keep vigil,
The Judge is at the gate."

When then will come the rapture of the saints ? We do not know. We only know that the night

is dark and stormy, and that, of old, it was when the Church was toiling in her rowing, and in the fourth watch of the night, that the Saviour came, walking over the troubled waves of the lake to His disciples.

When will come the rapture of the saints? We do not know. We only know that it must come when there has been strong division in the visible Church. For what otherwise mean those words which our Lord puts in the lips of the foolish virgins: "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out," unless they indicate a tremendous revolution of thought?

Meanwhile the night winds are sighing round our frail tenement of life, and the tears of millions are falling like pitiless rain shutting out the sunshine of God's love. If we look to the visible Church, she speaks with divided voice, and her progress is hindered by diverse counsels. The night is indeed dark; but it may be the prelude of the perfect day, whose joy shall never pass away.

"But though I do not know the how, or when,
I know my Lord, and 'tis for Him I wait.
Long years the 'Blessed Hope' of seeing Him
Has been my joy. And though beyond my ken
The day and hour of the opening gate;
And many happenings to my mind are dim;
Yet this I know—
That any night or any day,
I quickly may be caught away
To meet the Lord."

VII.

THE INTERVAL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

THE most frequent questions which have sprung to men's lips during this great war have been, When will the war be over? and What will come after the war?

If we are correct in supposing that the tribulation mentioned by St. Matthew (xxiv. 29) refers, in its secondary sense, to the time we are passing through in the present, then we have an outline in the following verses of what may be expected to occur. Our interpretation of that outline may be correct or incorrect, but the outline or plan is there.

"Immediately," writes St. Matthew, "after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."

Our Lord's disciples, familiar with the language of the Jewish prophets, would not misunderstand the meaning of such words. Isaiah had uttered like words concerning the fall of Babylon (xiii. 10). Ezekiel had used the same metaphor concerning

the fall of Egypt (xxxii. 7, 8). Joel and Amos had used similar language. Those words could not have meant the darkening of the literal sun, or moon; but they meant the fall or weakening of the ruling powers.

Prior to the great war, and during its course, the world has seen such a weakening of ruling powers, whether we think of China in the distant east or Mexico in the far west, whether our attention is arrested by a great power like Russia or a diminutive one like Portugal, as men could never have anticipated as possible to occur all within the brief space of ten years.

We may yet expect to see a further weakening of ruling powers after the war, be they kings or presidents. The various governments of the world appear to be losing their authority and power to govern, and to be swayed by the consideration of what makes for popularity rather than for the maintenance of right and justice. Before the war the estimated effect which a given line of political policy would have in swaying the votes of the people was a far more potent force with politicians than the urgent necessities of the nation. This has ever been the weakness of democracy; and we see no reason for supposing that the democracies of the future will be more free from this vice than the democracies of the past. On the contrary, all the tendencies of to-day appear to show that this weakness will be considerably increased.

INTERVAL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW 61

St. Matthew next warns his readers that "then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." Many of the Fathers believed that these words indicated the appearance of a luminous cross in the sky, comparable to that which Constantine the Great saw. There appears, however, no good ground for this supposition, though it may prove to be the correct interpretation. The words imply some clear, visible manifestation, which apparently takes place immediately before the rapture of the saints, and may be the occasion of that cry in the parable of the Ten Virgins, "Behold, the bridegroom!"

But verse 31 may be parallel to verse 30, and not successive to it. The verses which narrate the case of the faithful servant, and also of the evil servant, in the closing part of the chapter, are most certainly prior in point of time to verse 31, which tells of the gathering together of God's elect.

But if verses 30 and 31 are parallel, then the sign, whatever it may be, might well be simultaneous with the sounding of the trumpet, which precedes the rapture of the saints, and that transcendent event in itself would be conducive to that general mourning which is mentioned.

The time of the rapture is indicated by the parable of the fig-tree. As when the fig-tree puts forth its leaves, the summer is nigh; so also when these things come to pass—the tribulation of those days, and the weakening of the earthly powers

of government which follows—then the Advent of the Lord is close at hand.

But there is much more than that in this allusion to the fig-tree. The fig-tree is an emblem of the Jewish people. Not only might this be gathered from the language of the prophet Jeremiah, "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; like those good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good" (xxiv. 5, and cp. 8).

But more especially is this to be inferred from the language of our Lord when He says in St. Luke's Gospel, "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" (xiii. 6, 7). In the interpretation of this parable the fig-tree is almost universally held to be the Jewish people.

Even more to the point is the acted parable of the cursing of the barren fig-tree (Matt. xxi. 18-20), which again is almost universally taken to mean the Jewish people, though one or two of the most modern commentators consider the fig-tree represents the Holy City rather than the nation as a whole.

The words *for ever* should be carefully noted;

INTERVAL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW 63

as thus translated they refer literally to the fig-tree, but in their application to the Jewish people we can give the more literal rendering *for an age*. That æon, or age, appears to terminate with the rapture of the saints.

The sign, then, that our Lord gives as to the nearness of that great event is the putting forth of leaves by the fig-tree, that is, the Jewish people. Their national life has been dead during the long centuries of the Christian era. They have been scattered among all nations. They have been persecuted, as never any race has been persecuted before; but as a people they still survive, and not only survive, but they have been showing for a century past the most unmistakable signs of renewed national life. The fig-tree is putting forth leaves, therefore the time must be at hand, even at the doors.

In three main directions has the Jewish fig-tree been putting forth leaves during the last quarter of a century:

(i.) The Jewish race in that period has produced a number of noted men in all ranks and walks of life, quite out of proportion to the smallness of its population. Jews have occupied prominent positions in most of the European cabinets, not to mention their prominence in law, medicine, music, art, and science.

(ii.) The Jews have shown unmistakable signs of renewed national life in the Zionist movement, and in the desire so recently expressed by a Jewish

regiment that they should be allowed to go and fight for their own country, that is, for the conquest of Palestine.

(iii.) During the last quarter of a century, moreover, Jews have actually migrated to Palestine in larger numbers than ever before during their long period of exile.

It is because the Jewish fig-tree has been showing such remarkable signs of life after centuries of a ruined and blasted national existence that we are confirmed in our view that the present visitation is the harvest of the earth, of which the Scriptures speak, and is thus distinguished from previous depopulating judgments, such, for instance, as the Black Death, which have fallen upon Europe in the past.

Our Lord gives very little indication of what takes place upon the earth after the rapture of the saints, until He depicts that sublime and awful judgment scene described in chapter xxv. of this Gospel. But He tells us of the door being shut, and of the earnest but unavailing entreaties of those outside to enter in.

He speaks of the outer darkness, and of weeping and gnashing of teeth, which appears to be the lot of those left upon the earth, and thus leads up to the tremendous judgment scene, which is considered more fully in the next chapter.

But the Parable of the Talents, which follows that of the Ten Virgins, and precedes the great

INTERVAL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW 65

assize of the nations, is an indication of that judgment of the saints to which St. Paul alludes when he says, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. v. 10), and it apparently takes place in the aerial regions. In preceding the judgment of the nations it accords with the order of events alluded to by St. Peter, when he says that judgment must first begin at the house of God (1 Peter iv. 17).

VIII.

THE JUDGMENT SCENE OF ST. MATTHEW XXV.

THE twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel closes with that great judgment scene, which is one of the most sublime descriptions in the pages of the New Testament. But an important question arises as to what precise period this great assize of the nations is to be assigned.

Is it, as almost all the commentators assert, the Last Judgment?

Is it, to quote the words of Dean Alford, "the great and universal judgment at the end of this period also prophesied of distinctly in order in Rev. xx. 11-15—in which *all the dead*, small and great, shall stand before God. This last great judgment answers to the judgment on Jerusalem, *after* the Christians had escaped from it: to the gathering of the eagles (ministers of vengeance) to the carcase."

We venture to submit the following reasons by way of suggesting that this is not the last judgment; that it is not the judgment of the great

JUDGMENT SCENE OF ST. MATTHEW XXV. 67

white throne, which is set up at the close of the millennial reign ; but, on the contrary, it is that judgment of the nations which ushers in the reign of righteousness.

That a reign of righteousness is to be established upon this earth is perfectly clear from innumerable references in both the Old and New Testaments.

Thus Isaiah says, " And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people : and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more " (ii. 4).

And again, " But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth : and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

" And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them . . . for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea " (xi. 4, 5, 6, 9)

Similar visions of a glorious epoch to come are also given by him in chapters xxxii. and xxxv.

It is apparently the same period to which St. Paul looked forward when he wrote in his epistle

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to the Romans, "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" (viii. 19).

It is the same period to which St. Peter referred when he said, "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts iii. 21).

But while this reign of righteousness is certainly destined to come, it is also clear from the statements of the prophets that this period of blessing will be ushered in by, and will succeed, a time of great judgment (see especially Zech. xii. and xiv. and Rev. xix.).

Now, most commentators recognize that the Gospel of St. Matthew is essentially the Gospel of the Kingdom. In the opening chapter is given the royal descent of our Lord in the line of David; in the second chapter the wise men come to Jerusalem with the question on their lips, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" And in fact there are but five chapters in which there is no reference either to the king or the kingdom. Sometimes it is the kingdom of God, sometimes the kingdom of the heavens, sometimes simply the kingdom. Both our Lord and the Baptist commenced their ministry with the proclamation, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The Lord sent forth His disciples to make a similar proclamation (x. 7). In the Lord's Prayer

JUDGMENT SCENE OF ST. MATTHEW XXV. 69

we are directed to pray, Thy kingdom come. Had the Jews accepted our Lord's teaching and ministry the kingdom would have been established then and there upon the earth ; but they rejected our Lord, and therefore the kingdom was taken away from them (xxi. 43), and the first gospel closes with a promise to the Church that Christ will be with His people until the consummation of the age.

The kingdom of righteousness to-day, after nineteen centuries of Christian teaching, appears to be as far off as ever. Moreover, if the latter part of this chapter which we are considering is the last judgment, the book, which says so much about the kingdom, gives no intimation that it is ever really established. For the parable of the Ten Virgins shows that when the time comes for the bride—the Church—to enter into the marriage feast, at least half the number of professing Christians, if we are to take the proportion literally, are not ready.

But does this chapter give us the last judgment ?

We have a picture of the last judgment in the words of St. John (Rev. xx. 11-15). It speaks of a great white throne, and of the heaven and the earth fleeing away ; while the opening verse of the next chapter speaks of a new heaven and a new earth. It tells of the dead, small and great, standing before God, and of the sea and death and Hades giving up the dead in them. It speaks of men being judged individually, " every man according

to their works." It tells of those who were not found written in the book of life being cast into the lake of fire, concerning which it had already been stated (verse 10) that the devil is tormented in that lake of fire unto the ages of the ages, that is, undoubtedly, for all eternity.

But the judgment scene in St. Matthew speaks of the throne of His glory ; it says nothing about the dead being present, but it speaks of all nations being gathered before the Son of man. It speaks of men being judged in the mass, those " on the right hand " and " those on the left hand."

Those on the right hand inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world ; whereas the elect were chosen of God " in Him before the foundation of the world " (Eph. i. 4, and cp. 2 Tim. i. 9 and Titus i. 2).

Then, as regards the test of entrance into the kingdom, no question is asked as to faith and repentance ; no test which is distinctive of Christianity is applied ; everything turns on the question of conduct to those who are termed by our Lord " these, my brethren." And so marked is this that neither the " sheep " nor the " goats " realize in the least that they have done anything, or neglected to do anything, in connection with our Lord.

Now, all this does not appear to agree with the terms of entrance into the heavenly kingdom. " No man cometh to the Father but by me," says

JUDGMENT SCENE OF ST. MATTHEW XXV. 71

our Lord (St. John xiv. 6). "There is none other name under heaven given among men," says St. Peter, "whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). "Without faith it is impossible to please him," says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 6). "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," says St. Paul (Rom. v. 1).

Then, further, if this chapter gives an account of the last judgment, it is obvious that it follows the Messianic reign of righteousness of which all the prophets have spoken, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah xi. 9).

In that case it is difficult to understand the ignorance of the "sheep" and the "goats." It is true there is a predicted falling away after the reign of righteousness (Rev. xx. 7, 8), but that is suggestive of wilful sin, not of ignorance.

Then, further, the words "before Him shall be gathered all the nations" appear to be decisive against this being the last judgment. The expression *all the nations* occurs some twenty times in the New Testament, but apart from the case before us not once does it appear to refer to other than living nations.

Now, the word translated *nations*, and more frequently translated *Gentiles*, is one of the commonest in the New Testament. It occurs in all over one hundred and forty times. Yet,

apart from the passage under consideration, it never refers to the dead, but always to living nations.

We do not speak of the dead as *nations* ; neither did the writers of the New Testament. When we speak of the nations of antiquity we always have in mind, not the dead individuals of whom those nations were once composed, but the living nations as they were upon this earth in former days.

Why, then, should it be supposed that the evangelist in recording the discourse of our Lord should write one of the commonest words in use, and give to it a false meaning ?

The dead are spoken of in the New Testament as those that sleep, as the dead small and great, or simply the dead ; but *never* as nations. The conclusion is irresistible. Our Lord used the word nations, and He must have meant nations. And thus the scene depicted in St. Matthew xxv. cannot be an account of the last judgment.

If this line of reasoning be correct, then the difficulty which has been felt by so many in the concluding verse of the chapter, " And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal," simply disappears.

That verse is a glaring example of how a regard for a beautiful, rhythmic rendering led our translators to sacrifice accuracy to euphonious expression. The revised version runs, " And these shall go away into eternal punishment : but the righteous into eternal life."

JUDGMENT SCENE OF ST. MATTHEW XXV. 73

But the word translated *eternal* in its noun form and in its adjectival form is one of the commonest words in the New Testament. Its meaning is often best secured by the literal rendering *age*, or *age-long*. And we apprehend that this is its true meaning in the last verse of this chapter. It is not eternal, or eternity; that is expressed by the ages of the ages; but it is age-long. It appears to refer to the age, or æon, which is to succeed this Christian era, or Church age, and it may be allowable, perhaps, to express it as the Messianic age, or the era of the kingdom.

It appears to be that restitution of all things to which St. Peter referred, and which the prophets saw in vision. It is that period of which Isaiah speaks when he says, "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that has not fulfilled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (lxv. 20).

And so the verse indicates a lengthening of human life, of which in this age we have no conception, but which was quite familiar to those who dwelt upon this earth before the Flood. The righteous shall have this age-long life; while those on the left hand go into age-long punishment—punishment which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.

Thus the verse does not refer to either heaven or hell, as we usually understand those words.

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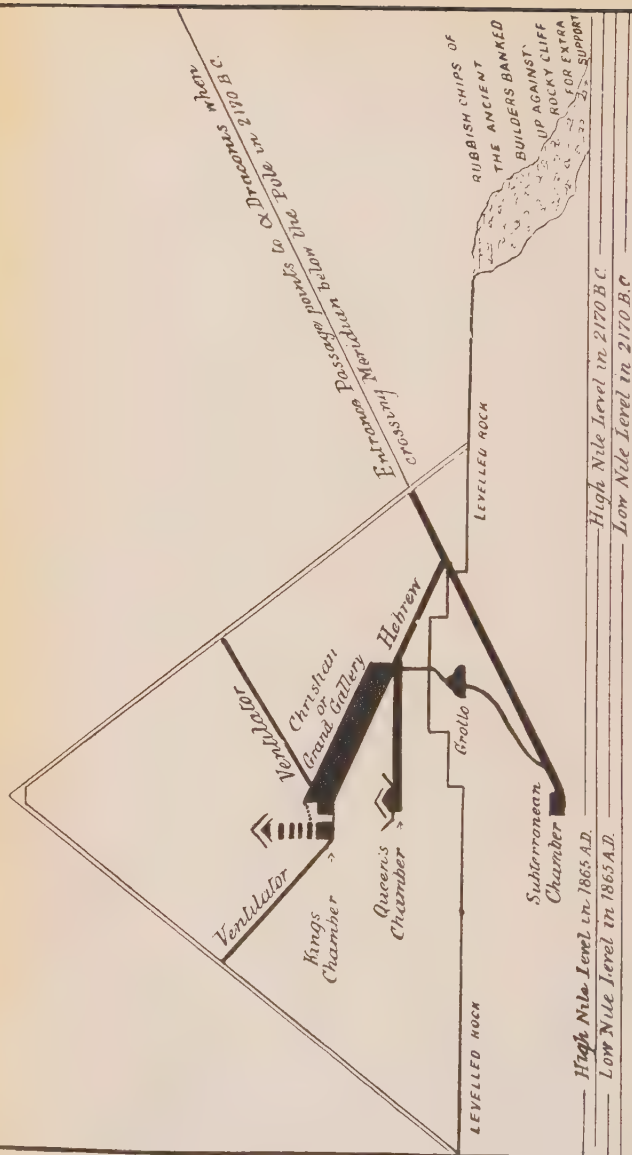
Heaven and hell stand yet in the future beyond the fulfilment of this verse.

If we turn to the Book of the Revelation we find much to confirm this view. We find our Saviour smiting the nations with a sharp sword (xix. 15). We read of the devil being confined to what is evidently a prepared place—for whatever the words, “the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand” may mean, they imply a prepared place. We note that the devil is confined merely for the age—namely, during the thousand years’ reign (xx. 1-3). We further note that the rest of the dead—which apparently must include those slain by the sharp sword of the previous chapter—live not again until the thousand years are finished (xx. 5).

Nothing here contradicts the view we have taken above; on the contrary, everything here mentioned appears to confirm that interpretation. If it be correct, the judgment scene in St. Matthew xxv. is none other than that vintage judgment to which we have already referred.

If this be so, then the sequel to the parable of the Talents bears a striking resemblance to the closing words of the parable of the Pounds: “But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me” (Luke xix. 27); in fact, exactly the same truth is conveyed, only somewhat fuller, and clothed in different language.





A VERTICAL SECTION (From South to North looking West) OF THE GREAT PYRAMID.

IX.

CONFIRMATION FROM AN UNEXPECTED SOURCE.

AT this stage there was placed in the writer's hands a little work, entitled, "The Great Pyramid and Great Britain," by Mr. H. de St. Dalmas. By taking a slightly different interpretation from that taken by the author, and yet suggested in his pages, we found a most striking confirmation of the views enunciated in this book.

Pyramid students will be familiar with the interpretation which assigns to the grand gallery the symbol of the Christian dispensation.

Now, the grand gallery terminates its ascending rise in a high perpendicular step. The exit from the grand gallery continues on the level of this step, and very speedily the height is contracted from the twenty-eight feet of the gallery to some forty-three inches, which is the height of the little passage leading into what is termed the antechamber.

The exit from the antechamber into the king's chamber is by a similar low passage, which, however, is about double the length of the former one.

Now, Pyramid students, as a rule, appear to

interpret the antechamber as signifying the Millennium, and the king's chamber as indicating heaven. But they evidently have some doubts as to the fitness of this symbolism, for Mr. de St. Dalmas says :

“ Seeing that this judgment scene appears to be symbolized by the granite coffer in the king's chamber, it may be questioned if that chamber itself does not represent the hall or throne of judgment, rather than the eternal glory, which may possibly not have any material symbol in the Pyramid, unless it be in the supposed undiscovered chamber ” (p. 68).

There appears to be further evidence on the same point in the antechamber itself. The side of the antechamber is divided into five sections, or panels, four of which are sunk or recessed. The second of these panels from the low entrance from the grand gallery is occupied by a smooth leaf of granite, formed of two stones, one above the other, and the upper one is adorned with a curious boss, or knob, as it were a handle with which to move it. Grooves were made apparently for it to slide in, but the panel itself is firmly cemented into its place.

Concerning this the late Professor Piazzzi-Smyth says :

“ The granite leaf, though small compared with the principal stones about it, is yet not formed of one piece but two, one placed above the other, and the upper with a very curious and unique adorn-

ment—the boss—looking like a handle whereby to pull the upper half of the granite leaf upwards in its grooves, and perhaps disclose a small hollow space containing the key of the whole Pyramid. The grooves for sliding the block upward are open, smooth and ready for such a movement ; but the blocks themselves are cemented into their places ” (p. 66).

Before indicating the interpretation which the present writer would put upon the granite leaf, we must once more revert to the grand gallery.

While the exit from the grand gallery on the level of the perpendicular step is by the low and difficult passage before mentioned, there is another exit overhead on the roof level, which leads by a passageway to a kind of “sanctuary over the ceiling of the king’s chamber.”

Pyramid students have interpreted this as a symbol in stone of the rapture of the saints, who are to be delivered out of the great tribulation. We have, however, already pointed out that the Scriptures clearly indicate that the tribulation is divided into two parts—the Harvest and the Vintage. We have also mentioned that the Church passes through the harvest judgment, but is delivered out of the world before the vintage of the earth is cast into the wine-press of the wrath of God.

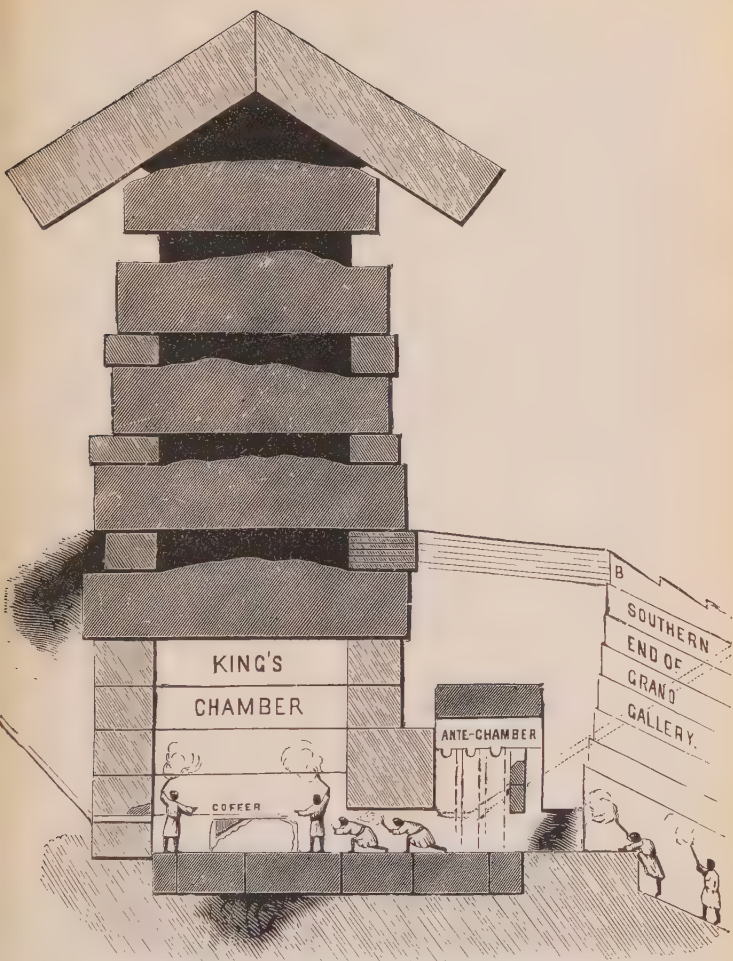
Now, we believe that these truths are beautifully shown by the symbolism of the Pyramid. The two narrow passages leading into and from the

antechamber represent respectively the Harvest and the Vintage. The overhead passage from the grand gallery is a symbol of the resurrection of all the saints of the Christian era, or, as St. Paul puts it, "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible." And, again, St. Paul says, "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep."

The antechamber itself represents, not the Millennium, but the interval between the Harvest and the Vintage judgments. But since the Church upon earth passes through the first part of the tribulation, she must be in the antechamber at the time of the resurrection of the sleeping saints.

The living saints do not rise from the dead, but they are changed and translated. "We shall not all sleep," says St. Paul, "but we shall all be changed." And, again, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Now, if the above is a correct description of the symbolism of the Great Pyramid, then there should be a different passage to indicate the rapture of the living saints from the passage which indicates the resurrection of the sleeping saints. We believe that passage exists, but that it is concealed for the present by the granite leaf. We further believe



SECTION : KING'S CHAMBER AND ANTE CHAMBER.



that the passage will be laid open, either before or following the rapture.

It is interesting to note that Colonel Garnier, in a work on the Great Pyramid, published in 1905, calculated that the world would enter the first narrow passage—the one which leads into the ante-chamber—in the year 1913 or in 1915; a marvelously accurate deduction when it is remembered that the calculation measures in time from the commencement of the Christian era, and in linear distance in the Pyramid some nineteen hundred inches.*

* "The Great Pyramid, its Builder, and its Prophecy," p. 215.

X.

THE VINTAGE.

WORDS fail to describe the terrible carnage indicated in the vintage scene of judgment as described by the prophet Isaiah (lxiii.) or by the apostle St. John (Rev. xiv. and xix.). The question, however, which will at once arise in many minds is this, But are these descriptions borne out by the words of our Lord?

We are compelled to say they are. What, for instance, mean these words following, "And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Luke xx. 17, 18).

More convincing still in this direction is the parable of the Pounds (Luke xix. 11-28). There in the last verse we have this terrible command given, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

Those words convey a most awful and terrible

meaning. If words mean anything at all, do they not imply that, at the coming of our Lord, those who will not have this Man to reign over them, men and women alike, will be doomed to destruction? Whether that doom is absolute and complete, like the destruction of Sodom, or partial, as was the rooting out of the Canaanitish tribes before the Israelites under Joshua, we are not told; but the language in which the vintage scene is described indicates that it is the most awful scene of carnage the world has ever known.

But examine in detail the parable of the Pounds. We can at once set aside, on the one hand, the statement, which most of the commentators make, that ten servants could be but a small fraction of the household of such a nobleman as is sketched in the parable, and, on the other hand, since the scene of the story is laid in the land of Palestine, we can sweep away Seneca's description that such households were nations rather than families. We can conclude that the number ten represents all the servants or slaves of the nobleman, however large the household may have been. But let the reader work out the natural inferences which follow. Did the citizens outnumber the servants, or did the servants outnumber the citizens? We are not told; but remembering that the scene is laid in Palestine, we must surely conclude that the citizens must have many times outnumbered the servants.

At any rate, that conclusion is borne out during

most of the Christian era. Take any year during the last sixteen centuries, and make a survey of that portion of the earth's surface which we call Christendom—that part in which the nations are termed Christian, as opposed to Mohammedan, or heathen. The number of those who are true and faithful servants of Jesus Christ our Lord has always been outnumbered by those who allow themselves to be termed His citizens, that is, who are nominally Christians and who do not repudiate the Christian name, but who will not have Him to reign over them.

But consider where such a conclusion carries us. The servants in the parable, with one possible exception, appear to be the same as the five wise virgins. They appear also to be the same as the saints, who are described by St. Paul as being caught up to meet the Lord in the air. For it is when the nobleman returns, having obtained the kingdom, that the servants stand before him to give an account of what they have done.

Whether the servant who kept his pound laid up in a napkin answers to the description given by St. Paul of the man whose work shall be burned, who shall suffer loss, “but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Cor. iii. 15), may well be an arguable point.

What number of souls, then, will be included in the rapture of the saints? We do not know. When we consider that there were seven thousand

in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and yet that so competent an observer as the prophet Elijah supposed that he was the only faithful servant of Jehovah left, we are inclined to think that the number of saints who have their part in the rapture will be very great, that the proportion, as given in the parable of the Ten Virgins, will be found to be correct.

But, on the other hand, when we think of such judgment-scenes as the Destruction of the Cities of the Plain or, earlier still, the Deluge, we are inclined to think the number will be comparatively small. But the most literal, minded of Bible readers would not be disposed to place the number at only ten. Should we not rather be inclined, taking the whole wide world into consideration, to suppose that the saints caught up to meet the Lord in the air will be a multitude corresponding in number to the dignity of that most transcendent event, and therefore to be counted not only by hundreds of thousands, but by millions?

Now, the population of Great Britain and Ireland amounts to over forty-five millions of inhabitants. If only one per cent. of such a population had their participation in the rapture, it would mean some four hundred and fifty thousand people from these islands alone, assuming that there are no violent fluctuations in the population. Grant, if you will, that the United Kingdom, in spite of the innumerable faults of its people, is the most Christian country

in the world, yet still one might expect that millions of other souls would be gathered up to meet the Lord from the face of the whole earth. But if that be so, must we not conclude that the slaughter of the citizens who will not have this Man to reign over them will run into tens of millions ?

Men may well say, Away with such a thought ! But however much we may hate and dread such a conclusion, still the words of scripture, if taken in their plain and literal sense, appear to include in the Vintage scene of judgment a far more terrible slaughter than is indicated in the Harvest judgment.

This, too, is what might have been expected from other words of our Lord, but uttered in quite a different connection. Our Saviour told His followers that they were the light of the world, that they were the salt of the earth. He thus plainly intimates that His Church, the salt of the earth, is the element which keeps the world from utter corruption. But when the Church is caught away to be with her Lord, does it not also follow that, just as when the spirit leaves the material body, corruption at once sets in ; so also when the Church is caught up out of the world, then corruption on a world-wide scale must set in upon the earth ?

Such thoughts appear to point to slaughter and destruction on a greater scale than even the world has known in this awful war ; and is there not a latent intimation of such a fact in our Lord's solemn warnings, " And as it was in the days of

Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man" ? and again, " Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot . . . even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed " ? (Luke xvii. 26, 28, 30). If it had only been the suddenness and unexpectedness of our Lord's Advent, there are many incidents in the Old Testament which supply the element of the unexpected. But our Lord chose only sudden and awful judgments for His warning, thereby surely intimating that the judgment which follows the rapture of the saints will be awful and terrible in its consuming wrath.

And it will apparently fall on those who will not have this Man to reign over them. Such words are a trumpet-call, a warning of the most urgent kind, to every nominal Christian who has not yet wholly turned to the Lord. There is yet a brief space, but more insistently than ever before are St. Paul's words true, " Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation " (2 Cor. vi. 2).

The figure of the Vintage is very suggestive of internecine strife. The clusters of the grapes are gathered and cast into the wine-press, and in that confined space they press one upon another. When the wine-press is full the one who treads the grapes commences his work, the grapes burst asunder, and the must runs out.

We believe this is not an inapt simile of how class must press against class, and interest clash with

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interest in the narrow confines of want, penury, and social discontent in the not very remote future. And then presently when the press is full, some external force, it may be economic, it may be social, it may be literal want produced by famine, or all combined, proceeds to act upon the accumulated mass, and the individual grapes grind and rend one another.

If this line of thought be in any way correct, it means the utter break up of the world as we have known it. It means that class warfare, social strife, and ruinous damage will run such riot through the civilized world as earth has never known before.

Hitherto the forces of order have in the long run triumphed over the forces of disorder. Nor need we fear that it will be otherwise in the Vintage scene of judgment, but we have much reason for supposing that such order as is at length evolved will be set up in what, for the time being, is a largely ruined world.

Order there must be eventually, if we are right in deducing from the Scriptures that the Vintage scene ends in that war of nations, that Armageddon, which is graphically described by St. John and other writers in the Bible.

We appear to be measurably near to a repetition of the time sketched by the prophet Isaiah, when he says, in connection with the judgment of the literal Babylon :

“ Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both

with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and he shall destroy the sinners out of it.

“ For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light : the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

“ And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity ; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

“ I will make a man more precious than fine gold ; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir ” (Is. xiii. 9-12).

XI.

TENDENCIES AND INFERENCES.

AS we stand peering into the mists of the future, with our hand resting on the chart of time—the Holy Scriptures—we see certain headlands, which stand out clear-cut against the distant horizon; but exactly how and when they are to be passed does not yet appear, for the cross currents are contrary, and the storm is still at its height.

It is, however, open to us all to note the present direction of the many cross currents on this ocean of life, and to draw such inferences as we can.

We have already concluded that the great Vintage scene of judgment, in whatever way it may commence, must end in a war of nations, which we believe will be very analogous to, and even more terrible than, the war which is now being waged. This view is based upon the statements made by the prophet Zechariah (xii. and xix); apparently also by the prophet Ezekiel (xxxviii. and xxxix.); and on the words of St. John (Rev. xix.).

Comparing these scriptures it is clear that an attack is made upon Palestine from the north,

and that the slaughter is so vast that the vultures are summoned to perform their part in the necessary work of sepulture (cp. Ez. xxxix. 2, 12 and Rev. xix. 17). If this be a correct outline of those words of scripture, what is the inference to be drawn? Does it mean that as Britain has fought the map of Europe round from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Baltic, commencing with Spain in the long ago, and closing in deadly conflict with Germany to-day, so also there is to come a mighty contest with Russia in the future? It may be so; for the chaotic Russia of to-day is certainly open to become a powerful instrument in the hands either of a successful despot, or, possibly, of a foiled and baffled Germany. Unless the Central Powers of Europe are completely defeated we must expect that another attempt will be made some time in the future to break up the British Empire; and where so likely a country in which to begin the attempt as in a restored Jewish state of Palestine?

We may not see the probability of this to-day, but no one would deny the possibility of it on the morrow yet to come.

All the prophecies bearing on the subject give more than a hint as to the depopulating nature of this last great war of the nations; it burns like fire, and the nations are as stubble (Mal. iv. 1). If we are to take such words with any approach to a literal meaning, they imply that the palaces of kings and nobles will be untenanted, that the

great hotels of Europe will become ruinous for want of inhabitants, even as medieval castles and religious houses are ruinous to-day, and large tracts of country will be left uncultivated. Such has been the course of history in the past in Assyria, in Mesopotamia, in Egypt, and in Italy; and why should not this happen in the world again? But is it likely? is it possible? may well be asked.

For reply to such questions we point to the pent-up passions in our social life, pent-up now under the stress of war, but ready to burst forth and to rend into a myriad fragments such remains of civilization as the war leaves intact.

Already, although employment was never so plentiful, and wages never so high, and in spite of high prices the worker never so independent, yet the word "repudiation" has been uttered by a responsible trade unionist in a trade union meeting. The word that is uttered by one voice to-day will be uttered by a million voices in the days of want and penury, which must come. Those voices will not heed the fact that repudiation of a nation's debt logically carries with it the repudiation of all other terms of security, and would land the world in chaos.

Again, during the war, Parliament has been engaged in extending the franchise, on a scale and to classes of voters hardly dreamed of by the politicians of twenty years ago. Now each extension of the franchise in the past has brought into being

a new political party, or quasi-party; and the extension of the franchise contemplated by Parliament to-day (November, 1917) must inevitably produce several new groups of politicians representative of the newly enfranchised interests. But for every interest represented there will be many more unrepresented; for parliamentary representation appears to be based upon the assumption that the whole country is divided vertically into a large number of sections called constituencies; whereas, as a matter of fact, the country is divided horizontally into a large number of classes. Moreover, the man of any particular class in a constituency, say in Cornwall, has more interests in common with a man of the same class in Northumberland, whom he has never seen, than he has with his neighbour in his own constituency, whom he sees every day of his life, but who is removed three degrees in the class strata, above or below him, as the case may be. So long as this state of things lasts there must inevitably be numerous minorities crushed out by majorities and left entirely unrepresented. Ireland, in three parts of which there are such unrepresented minorities, is a proof that the vertical system of representation is not altogether good for the majority, which is over-represented, nor yet for the minority, which is unrepresented. Is, then, the vastly increased franchise of to-day likely to give us peace and quiet times in the future?

Again, for a long time past trade disputes have generally been settled by giving the workers all, sometimes only part, of what they demanded. Only those expert in such matters can say whether this has, or has not, been justified by the facts of the industry concerned. But the point we desire to emphasize is this: some day the economic situation must be such that it will be impossible to meet the demands of the workers, and should a strike on a colossal scale occur in addition to the straitened financial situation in the future, the results would necessarily be disastrous.

In a speech, which was much commented on at the time, and which had reference to the national expenditure after the war, Lord Leverhulme said: "Could we bear this load and carry the Empire with its trade and commerce back into the calm safety of prosperity and sound finance? We could only do so provided all classes and both sexes followed the example set by our King and Queen, continue to make after the war the same sacrifices of ease and comfort, to continue to work as hard and with the same brotherhood as has been displayed by all classes without exception during the war."*

It is to be hoped that these words may be realized, but the outlook for their attainment is not particularly bright. And if we take a broader view, and glance at the world in general, we see very few countries which have not the same, or similar,

* The *Daily Telegraph*, September, 7, 1917.

difficulties to contend with as those which face us here at home.

On every hand, then, we see national and world forces and currents at work which, if exerted, are more than sufficient to wreck the remnants of civilization which will remain after the war, and to produce that social strife which is so fittingly typified by the clusters of grapes in the wine-press.

There is, however, one force which, if it could have free play, would eventually set all things right, even in this strangely disordered world, and that is the force of true religion. If every man loved God with all his heart and soul and strength and mind, if each obeyed the injunction, "Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbour's good," all might yet be well. But this presupposes that the world is Christian, whereas it is in the main anti-Christian ; nor would it be an exaggeration to say that a wave of evil-speaking, of pilfering, and, in some parts, of lasciviousness has swept over the land since the outbreak of war. Nor is there the least sign of spiritual revival. We may well expect, work, and pray for the quickening of faith in those who have faith, and in the case of children and young people ; but we must also expect a hardening of the heart in the case of those who have not already turned to their Lord and Saviour.

As we look ahead at the gathering clouds of the future we may well pray to God to make us watchful and prayerful, that we may be delivered from the evil days yet to come.

XII.

CONCLUSION.

WHAT, then, is our general conclusion? It is that the world is passing through the most momentous era in its history since the first Advent of our Lord. It is an age which is comparable only to such outstanding periods as the fall of the Roman Empire or the time of the Reformation.

We believe that after the war there will be an interval, an uneasy period of attempted adjustment, which will be marked by great crises in the spiritual and in the worldly spheres.

We deduce this conclusion from the fact that it is apparently between the Harvest and the Vintage judgments that Babylon the Great has a momentary gleam of great prosperity—perhaps an attempted reunion of Christendom—which causes her to say, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning” (Rev. xviii. 7), and then rushes to her lurid end. And it is certainly between “the tribulation of those days” and the judgment of the nations, that the Church, the Bride of Christ, is caught away to be with her Lord.

That the same period will be marked by great crises in the worldly sphere, in social, economic, and political life is quite patent to every thinker and writer to-day ; but if we are correct in believing that the antechamber in the Great Pyramid indicates the time between the Harvest and the Vintage judgments, then certain crises would appear to be symbolized by the pillars, or projections, which separate the recessed panels.

Further, when the interval is over, and the Vintage scene of judgment commences, we believe that the world will enter upon the most awful period of strife, misery, disorder, and finally war, that has been known in the course of its long history.

When will this occur ? We do not know ; but if the interval between the Harvest and the Vintage is scaled according to the course of nature in Palestine, then when the war is over it will not be difficult to calculate about the period when the Vintage crisis may be expected to commence. If the symbolism of the Pyramid, after the entrance into the first narrow passage, gives any indication of time, which is doubtful—many think it only indicates events—then the Vintage scene may be expected to last almost twice as long as the Harvest judgment.

Now, it is because the watchful members of the Church are delivered by the rapture of the saints from the unspeakable tribulation of the Vintage judgment, we believe that every man, who has the

least spark of faith within, should do his utmost by prayer, by watchfulness, by the study of the Word of God, to prepare himself against that day of crisis, which appears to be so fast approaching, when the number of God's elect shall be complete, and the door shall be shut.

Who can measure the shame of the Foolish Virgins, who have made a profession before the world that they belong to Christ, who have professed to serve Him, and have done wonderful works in His name, when it becomes patent to all the world that He Whom they have always claimed as Lord and Master acknowledges them not, and shuts them out from the bridal festival? Well may St. John write, "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

Only a real, living faith in our blessed Lord, only a life of patient waiting for His advent, of patient watching for the signs of His manifestation, and of patient working for His return will avail us on that day. As the people of old waited for the reappearance of the high priest from behind the veil, "So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28).

"Even so, Come Lord Jesus."

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